

This is very much the World-According-to-Williams. But, for me, what is most damning of all, is that the author himself acknowledges the redundancy of these exercises, commenting at the start of Chapter 4: 'Although the chapter offers an overview of many key topics in the field, it may not be comprehensive for your course, because every tutor in MCCS has a different view of what the "complete" field would look like' (p. 97).

I believe this book represents a lamentable lapse in judgement by both author and publisher. In the context of steeply rising tuition fees for UK undergraduates, it can only be seen as highly exploitative, feeding off students' understandable and growing concerns about the financial costs of academic underperformance. It demeans the fields of study it so incompletely addresses. Someone once said that there are books to be put to one side, and books to be thrown right across the room. This is one of the latter.

David Deacon
Loughborough University

Wilma de Jong, Martin Shaw and Neil Stammers (eds), *Global Activism, Global Media*. London: Pluto Press, 2005. £50.00 (hbk), £15.99 (pbk). 248 pp.

The term 'new social movements' has been used to refer to a broad array of ostensibly progressive politics that are said to have taken up where the trade union movements of the late 19th through the mid-20th century left off. Reflecting on the character and strategies of social movements since the mid-1970s, the language of much contemporary social theory has been employed to show how materialist politics have given way to 'postmaterialist' politics, marking a transition from proletarian class struggles to a rainbow of 'new antagonisms' that include conflicts over ecology, gender, race, sexual orientation and more. By some accounts, this transition is also characterized by a movement away from the nation-state as the focus of political power and contestation to a focus on transnational, if not global, politics and institutions. Whether or not we wish to embrace the postmaterialist theoretical frameworks used to explain the growth of transnational social movements (as there is a great deal of literature challenging such a view), it is impossible to deny the empirical reality that contemporary movements have become a force to be reckoned with. It is also impossible to ignore the myriad ways in which these movements have ushered in new and innovative forms of political communication.

Global Activism, Global Media provides a valuable account of these new forms of activism by bringing into relief the means of communication as vital tools for mobilizing and coordinating the activities of movement actors, as well as for reaching beyond movements themselves and into the so-called mainstream. As the editors state in their introduction, the book aims to overcome two general deficiencies: namely, the neglect of the subject of the media in the literature on social movements and civil society, and the overall neglect of the subject of social movements and civil society in communication and media studies. Although it has not been a case of total neglect on either side, the editors have a valid point that

more can be done, and this book advances the cause through its contributions to theoretical reflection and through the several valuable empirical case studies it contains. In doing so, the editors show awareness that many activists and academics alike sometimes display insufficient distance and critical self-reflection about their subject, and at times turn a blind eye to regressive movements that rely on the very strategies that are found to be so promising in movements they support. Social movement theory and research offers a window into the world of contemporary activism, but that window should not be made to filter out the possibility of a clear perception of how new and innovative techniques can be brought to bear on morally suspect causes, nor should it prevent us from seeing how problematic techniques may be used in the name of good causes. Questions about the potential for morally contradictory relationships between means and ends are always pertinent in social movement theory and research.

The editors explicitly display their political stripes ('For the purposes of this volume, activism is assumed to be mostly "progressive" and "non-violent" in its aims', p. 13), which is further emphasized by the selection of case studies the book contains. However, this owning up does not take the reader far in deciding what counts as 'progressive' or 'regressive'. Such terms are always arguable, but it is not a matter taken up in the editors' introduction or elsewhere in the book. Rather, we are presented with a familiar 'rainbow coalition' of contemporary movements that have come to redefine in practice the meaning of progressive politics. It is not easy to escape this tendency, and it is one to which I admit having fallen prey in my own writing on social movements and the media, but our identification with the problem takes us only marginally closer to addressing it. What counts as progressive politics, or politics of the Left, broadly or narrowly defined, has long been a matter of contention, dating back at least to the days when Lenin criticized 'Left-wing communism' by calling it 'an infantile disorder', if not earlier, when Friedrich Engels debated whether revolutionary aspirations could be fulfilled through parliamentary politics. In its less becoming manifestations, the question of 'What (or who) is Left?' has been the source of destructive internecine conflict. Today, the term 'politically correct' is used by Right-wing ideologues to discredit ostensibly progressive causes, but the term was originally used by the American New Left of the late 1960s as a playful form of self-criticism to call overzealousness into check. In the US, the student Left fell apart after the 1960s, but it arguably was resurrected in subsequent decades, perhaps unrecognizably so by the lights of critics of 'identity politics'. After Communism fell in Central and Eastern Europe, once-powerful Left-wing parties in Western Europe were radically weakened. Following the resurgence of protest politics of the late 1990s that have gathered around global trade and investment institutions (the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, Seattle, Prague, Quebec, etc.), followed by the worldwide anti-war movement focused on the US invasion of Iraq, the politics of the Left reached a level of global solidarity that is unprecedented in scale and scope, if not in intensity. Few would deny that the means of communication have been vital, both as means to create and strengthen the institutions of global market (or 'neo') liberalism that have risen to rapid dominance, and as worldwide means to *resist* them. But the question remains: What does it mean to be 'on the Left'? What are the contemporary contradictions of the Left? How should we critically examine the modern means of communication, built largely by military research and development, and globalized by corporate

capitalism, but also used to form the networks of resistance to these very same institutions of global domination? Perhaps these are questions best left for a more philosophical and less pragmatically oriented treatment than was intended by the editors of *Global Activism, Global Media*.

Among the most important considerations in answering this question are whether and how movements pertaining to class politics are conceived. Much has been written about whether, in light of the new social movements, we should say farewell to the working class and its struggles. Although this book contains no case study that directly addresses transnational labor movements, it should. Nevertheless, the subject is dealt with in more theoretical terms in the critique by Colin Sparks of the idea of a global public sphere in light of the relationship between inequality and accessibility. Undoubtedly, one of the most polarizing discourses in contemporary social theory pertains to the centrality of workers' rights and related struggles in light of the new movements. In the wake of years of eroding welfare states and deindustrialization in the global North, combined with the rise of industrial outsourcing to the South, new forms of transnational labor organization have become a fertile subject in practical and theoretical terms. Coupled with this subject is the widely held belief that the Left historically has overemphasized issues of class, or more specifically, industrial labor relations, to the neglect of the politics of race, gender, the environment and more. In sum, the implicit or explicit conviction that certain politics are 'progressive' or 'Left' presupposes agreement not only on what are the constitutive elements of such a politics, it also presupposes agreement on what are *not* contained in such a politics, including (and especially) what is 'Right'. *Global Activism, Global Media* is a book with a bias I share, but it also is a book that I believe sets aside rather than confronts a hard question that it raises. What is 'progressive'? It is not my intention to play an unfair game of criticizing a book for what it does not say. Indeed, we should focus on what it does do, and in fact does well, namely, shedding needed light on how the means of communication are vital to contemporary global social movements. However, we also should not simply conclude that the question of what constitutes progressive politics is simply 'academic'.

The book is structured in three parts, the first dealing in general terms with concepts that are central to the discourse about global activism: civil society, public sphere, social movement, activism, global communication and more. These essays do a very good job of setting the stage for further consideration of the case studies that follow in the remaining two parts. The opening essay by Ronnie Lipschutz provides a useful introduction to the idea of civil society and its emergence as a central concept in the discourse on global activism. Of particular interest is the influence of Foucault in his interpretation of global communication as a means of 'governmentality'. The author offers a familiar historicization of media technologies that divides media between 'one-way' mass media and 'two-way' interactive media. For example, television is a 'one-way' medium and some media, such as the Internet, are 'two-way' in that 'they permit both the production and consumption of information' (p. 24). But the distinction neglects some basic findings and sources of debate that have been central to media studies for decades. The notion that television is a one-way medium is accurate in a technical sense, but media theory and research has, for good reason, called into question the underlying production/consumption dichotomy by rethinking what constitutes the very act of production.

Certainly, one does not need to subscribe to an overly celebratory conception of 'the active audience' in order to recognize that the production of meaning is not an act simply imposed by media institutions upon passive television audiences. Furthermore, in technological terms, portable digital video has made it possible for television to become a part of the 'two-way' mode of communication to which Lipschutz refers. Equally important is that although the 'two-way' interactive digital media of communication enable individuals and groups to send and receive messages on a global scale, the dissemination of information by the world's major media institutions is one of, if not *the*, main uses of the World Wide Web. The Internet has become a vital tool for intensive interactive communication among global activists, but it is also a major feature of mass merchandizing and information dissemination, conforming to a pattern that resembles 'one-way' broadcast television usage. Overall, this chapter provides a rich framework for thinking about global activism, if not of global media.

A provocative essay by Colin Sparks poses an important challenge to the prevailing consensus about the very existence of something called 'the global public sphere'. By contrast, other authors in the book, for example, Ivor Gaber and Alice Wynne Willson, state that their starting point 'is the notion that there is such a phenomenon as an international "public sphere"' (p. 95). Citing the definition of the public sphere offered by Jürgen Habermas, Sparks maintains that, given their implicit tendencies towards national partisanship, national media contradict the possibility of a global public sphere. But partisanship is not the antithesis of the Habermasian conception of the public sphere. The early modern bourgeois public sphere of which Habermas wrote was one that was constituted by partisans of all kinds. There was internal homogeneity within, but considerable diversity across, the table societies, coffee houses and salons, and the publications on which they relied for news and opinion. The national public spheres that were constituted by these forums in Germany, England and France were the product of partisans who disagreed on much. Partisanship was always a reality, if not in fact a foundation, of the discourse and debate that historically constituted a national public sphere. To the extent that localized or sectoral partisanship addressed the problems of a national polity, such partisans were participants in a national public sphere. Why, then, would we not want to look upon national partisans, when they are addressing the problems of a nascent global polity, as participants in a global public sphere? And there is another unifying similarity between the national public spheres of 18th-century Europe and the global public sphere that arguably is emerging today. Sparks's foundational presupposition of equity as a prerequisite of the public sphere neglects the fact that the Habermasian conception was itself based on a foundation of inequality. As Habermas has openly acknowledged, and as his many critics have been quick to point out, he sought from the start to provide an account of the exclusionary, *bourgeois* (and male-dominated) public sphere. The national public spheres of the 18th century, and the arguably nascent global cosmopolitan public sphere of today, share one very important common feature: *class privilege*, and with it, cultural capital and communicative competence, is perhaps the most vital enabling factor in gaining effective access to the public sphere. This fact is implicitly understood by Sparks, who with good reason takes issue with the very premise that a public sphere can be understood to be democratic if the formal guarantee of access 'to all citizens' is frustrated by the realities of social inequality.

But his overall argument is misplaced in that it should be posed as a challenge to the Habermasian premise that the public sphere was in fact ever accessible to all, rather than arguing with those who offer a conceptualization of a global public sphere that parallels Habermas's.

Subsequent chapters by Neil Stammers and Catherine Eschle, Peter Waterman and Sarah Berger all yield valuable insights into the role of communication media in global activism. Stammers and Eschle make an important contribution by clarifying the terminology whereby social movements and global activism are described. Waterman looks at the World Social Forum, which has provided a vital stage for the coalescence of a global justice movement that attempts not only to articulate the legitimate grounds for opposing neoliberal globalization but also for affirming alternative visions founded on the premise that another (indeed better) world is possible. Sarah Berger's essay decries political violence by activists and notes the convenient use of *agents provocateurs* to undermine the largely non-violent politics that has been a principal foundation of the moral authority of global activists.

Parts two and three of *Global Activism, Global Media* are about how movements make use of the 'mainstream' and 'alternative' media, respectively, offering a rich array of case studies that do much to illuminate the many faces of global activism. Of course, the categories 'mainstream' and 'alternative' are subject to all kinds of questions about criteria for inclusion and exclusion. But this subject is handled well, as the editors and contributors to this volume acknowledge implicitly and explicitly the complex and contradictory relationships between these two analytical categories. Among the excellent contributions to this book are essays by some of the most noteworthy participants in the discourse on the role of media as means of political activism, including Peter Waterman, John Downing, Catherine Eschle and Martin Shaw. Significant themes include important questions about NGOs: their relationships to social movements, their accountability, privilege and power. The theme of non-violence vs violence appears in several chapters, emphasizing the editors' alliance with the Gandhian conviction that violence cannot be the path to non-violence. The power of non-violence as a form of political communication comes through the capacity to lovingly persuade the perpetrators of injustice and violence to embrace non-violence as well. In all, the editors have assembled a fine book that offers fruitful intersections between communication and social movements. As they note in the book's introduction, their aim has not been to offer a definitive account, but rather to open up a vitally important subject of social theory, research and practice by putting the combined concerns of global activism and global media into a common frame of reference. In doing so, they provide a valuable service to activists and scholars (not mutually exclusive categories) alike.

Andrew Calabrese
University of Colorado